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THE PUBLIC WORKS SYSTEM

SUMMARY

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The PUBLIC WORKS SYSTEM

SUMMARY

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Comprehensive Planning Division
Planning Department
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Presentation: 2 P.M.,Oct.21,1960

June 30, 1967

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The Public Works System

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I INTRODUCTION: The scope and need for Public Works Planning

No single government or agency within the American system carries out the public works program. Although national growth and prosperity depend on a well conceived and balanced public works program, each of the three major levels of government (federal, state, local) has a partial responsibility to enact such a program. The vast number of agencies concerned with public works planning can best be enumerated as follows:

Federal Agencies-40
States, Territories and Possessions-53
Counties-3047
Special Districts-14,423
Municipalities-17,067
Townships-17,214
School Districts-50,453

Total Government Entities: 102,397

The need for public works planning is important because of:

1) The unprecedented demand for new facilities

2) Urgent necessity to get the most for every dollar spent

3) Ever-closer and complex relationship among our governments in their public works activities

Demands are large because of the types of demand to be met:

1) Lost ground demand: stemming from the 1940's when materials, equipment and manpower to keep public works plants up-to-date were lacking. Because of the low rate of construction, the number of deferred projects increased steadily. Few governments have been able to make sizeable reductions in the backlogs. The national public works program to meet the lost ground demand would probably cost $130 billion during the next decade. A good example locally is the deferred cleaning and cement lining of pipeline from Roxbury to South Boston.

2) Replacement demand: stemming from the demand for facilities which need

to be modernized or to replace those facilities which are wearing out. Therefore, unless public works facilities are maintained and replaced according to regular schedule, public works services will fall even further below the minimum level. As the backlog increases, the shortage grows. To keep our plants reasonably up-to-date would require on a nation-wide basis another $20 billion in the next ten years. A good example locally is the replacement of bridges over the Ft. Point channel.

3) Expansion demand: stemming from our needs to accommodate the expected growth in population and to bring services to an acceptable minimum

a) keeping up with the population growth

b) improving standards in public works programs

A good example locally is the need for constructing sewage facilities in West Roxbury.

National trends seem to indicate greater public expenditures in the future than in the past, thereby emphasizing the necessity for government to extract the greatest return from monies spent on large scale projects. If taxpayers are to absorb increased taxation, it becomes imperative that they receive goods and services of increased quality and quantity.

When coordination between agencies is absent, facilities are often built with no relation to the plans of other agencies or governments in the same area. Even within the same area, present public works plans frequently conflict with one another. The most troublesome problems so far as coordination is concerned are found in the 189 metropolitan areas where 97% of the population growth of the past five years has occurred. Each metropolitan area averages 95 distinct political entities and in the Boston area, the average is even higher, because in addition to the large number of communities involved, there are state-wide and metropolitan area-wide agencies such as the Mass. Dept. of

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Public Works, the Metropolitan District Commission the Massachusetts Port Authority, the Massachusetts Transportation Authority, as well as the various commissions designated to build turnpikes, parking garages, auditoriums and the like. It is certain that with the abundance of governments, the rapid growth of their needs and the complexity of their financial programs, few public works programs can be effectively carried out until better measures of coordination are achieved. Exactly how these measures can be achieved is beyond the scope of this study.

A further limitation on this study is one of definition. In many cities, public works include construction of schools, municipal power plants, parks and playgrounds, etc. In Boston, however, public works planning under the existing governmental structure does not include schools, playground facilities, airports, water facilities, hospitals or other major buildings. What remains then is essentially servicing the residents and commercial and industrial establishments in the community with every basic "housekeeping" services, such as street, sewer, water, highway and bridge maintenance and operation.

The planning question thus becomes one of location of facilities and whether they should be centralized or dispersed, and to what degree such a centralization or dispersion should be carried out. Mention will be made of a possible expansion of local public works planning, coordination, and operation.

Let us first consider both the general, and the specific functions of the Boston Public Works Department.

II PUBLIC WORKS FUNCTIONS

A. GENERAL FUNCTIONS:

The Public Works Department is in charge of the construction and maintenance of all streets, sidewalks, and sewers; granting of permits to open, occupy, obstruct, and use portions of the streets and sidewalks; planting and removal of trees in public ways; street lighting both gas and electric; installation, maintenance, and operation of all fixtures and appliances held by the City for its water supply; cleaning and flushing of streets, as well as snow removal from streets; collection and removal of ashes, garbage and refuse; installation and maintenance of street signs; construction, maintenance and operation of the City-owned bridges used as highways. Formerly the City of Boston operated the Sumner tunnel connecting the North End with East Boston.

B. SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS:

Central Office - The Commissioner of Public Works, the personnel function and the responsibility for the care, control and maintenance of five garages and related facilities have been placed in the central office. They have responsibility for nearly four hundred units of automotive equipment, including about 250 trucks (e.g., snow fighters, compressors, catchbasin cleaners, pick-up trucks, dump trucks, wreckers, flushers, derrick trucks and miscellaneous others), as well as many street sweepers, loaders, tractors, and graders.

Highway and Bridge - This division assumes the responsibility for the construction and maintenance of all public streets, including street cleaning and flushing, snow removal, street signs, street lamps and lamps on public grounds and alleys and the operation and maintenance of the greater number of highway bridges within the limits of the City

and the abolition of grade crossings. About 750 miles of city streets and 25,000 street lamps fall under the jurisdiction of the division.

Sanitary - The responsibility for contract collection, removal and disposal of ashes, garbage and refuse is considered to be a part of this function. By means of city ordinances, commercial refuse collection may be made by contractors in return for direct payment by business establishments.

Sewer - The Sewer division has the responsibility for the maintenance and construction of all sewerage works. Assessments and damages (for land takings) are levied by the Public Improvement Commission on estates benefited by new sewers. However, no more than 75% of the cost may be assessed upon estates for a new sewer.

Boston's main drainage system comprises 24.12 miles of intercepting sewers, with a pumping station at Old Harbor Point, and storage reservoirs and outlet into the harbor at Moon Island, in operation since 1884. It takes care of the sewage from the City Proper, South Boston, and parts of Roxbury, West Roxbury, and Dorchester.

The common sewer system has two electrically-operated automatic pumping stations. A station at Union Park and Albany Streets was built in 1915 to alleviate flooding in the South End by pumping and discharging the surplus storm water flow into the South Bay. The second station, at Summer St. (opposite E St.) in South Boston was built in 1913 to take care of sewage from the Commonwealth Pier district and the Army and Navy bases.

Charlestown and East Boston sewage discharges into the main North Metropolitan System of the State, which discharges into the harbor waters south of Deer Island.

Sewage from Brighton, part of Back Bay and a part of Roxbury discharges into the South Metropolitan System and is lifted by pumping at the Ward Street Pumping Station; then it flows through the main sewer, which also drains by gravity portions of West Roxbury and Dorchester and all of Hyde Park, finally outletting into Quincy Bay at Nut Island.

Water

This division assumes the responsibility for the care and maintenance of all pipes and other fixtures and appliances for the purpose of the city's water supply, and all water assessments and other charges necessary for the maintenance of the division. Nearly 100,000 meters, thirteen thousand fire hydrants and more than one thousand miles of the supply and distributing water main give dimension to the task of this division.

Along with nearly thirty other communities Boston belongs to the Metropolitan Water District and has made payments to the state for its water supply since 1898. The City of Boston takes about 54% of the entire water supply of the district (or about 163 gallons per capita per day). Water meter revenue derived from city users provides funds for construction and repair functions of this division.

Engineering

The Engineering division has the responsibility for planning, surveying, estimating and engineering studies for the other divisions of the Public Works Department, as well as for making topographic and property surveys, photographic and reproduction work, surveys for other departments and administrative functions for the Public Improvement Commission.

Public Improvement Commission

The Commissioners of Traffic, Real Property and Public Works are ex-officio members of this commission established in 1954 to authorize laying out, widening, relocating and altering, highways and to order construction of sanitary sewers and storm drains, to take land for public purposes (except public housing and off-street parking) and to permit private ways to be opened for public travel, to level assessments for street, sidewalk, and sewer betterments and to issue permits for the location of wire-carrying poles, conduits, pipes, tracks and similar uses of the public ways.

III CRITERIA FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Concentration vs. Dispersion

The structure of the public works yards system may be viewed as one which could be either dispersed or concentrated. Public works facilities which were concentrated in one or two yards might be recommended for reasons of economy, either spatial or financial. However, there are strong reasons why public works service yards should be dispersed. First, Boston's peculiar shape results in appendages, like East Boston and Brighton, are virtually distinct and remote from the rest of the city. These two areas could not practically be served from a central yard because of their location. Two examples point toward this conclusion:

In the event of disaster or attack, if the Sumner Tunnel or Callahan Tunnel to East Boston should be bombed or flooded, the East Boston section of the city would be without vehicular transportation links to the rest of the city and particularly to the central public works yard. Emergency vehicles, such as trucks or catch-basin cleaners, could not reach East Boston at all.

Garbage from Brighton would have to be hauled through the Back Bay along Commonwealth Avenue to the South Bay Incinerator, creating both an unnecessary nuisance to the character of the traversed area as well as adding to the traffic congestion on Commonwealth Avenue.

Second, one or two public works yards might be considered to be economical, but this is not necessarily true, because of the fixed size of the equipment. There are practically no economies of scale. Further, concentrating facilities in one or two yards would create pressures for extensive tracts of land which perhaps could be put to

more economical use, such as industrial.

Third, a stronger reason for dispersing the facilities is related to distance and travel time. Orient Heights, Oak Square and Readville exemplify the extreme distances vehicles might have to travel from a central yard. Practical judgment indicates that vehicles should not have to travel 8-10 miles on a routine service call.

Fourth, traffic congestion resulting from the constant pattern of vehicles coming and going would create new problems in the vicinity of the central public work yard(s).

Fifth, another argument for dispersion is related to peak hour traffic conditions, heavy snow storms, disasters (eg., the Neponset Bridge burning or Logan airport crash of a short time ago). The City of Boston simply cannot risk putting all its vehicles in one place because of the possibility that these vehicles will not be capable of the mobility which is essential in emergencies.

Finally, another strong reason for dispersal is related to disaster or attack and the need for coordination with Civil Defense authorities.

Multi-function or Single-Function Yards

The debatable points as to whether the dispersed yards should be multi-function or single-function are fairly well resolved by the arguments for dispersal, against those for super-concentration of public works facilities. With the exception of bridge maintenance and repair and street sign service, (which can and should be centralized at one yard), the yards should be multi-functional.

Access

Public works yards should be accessible to the primary (ie. major) street system of Boston. This is necessary to avoid frequent

travel through residential areas because the quality of public works vehicular traffic is detrimental to these areas. It is also necessary because the quantity of vehicular traffic can only sensibly be handled by larger streets with greater traffic capacity, and finally, because vehicles move more swiftly and easily on wider, major streets.

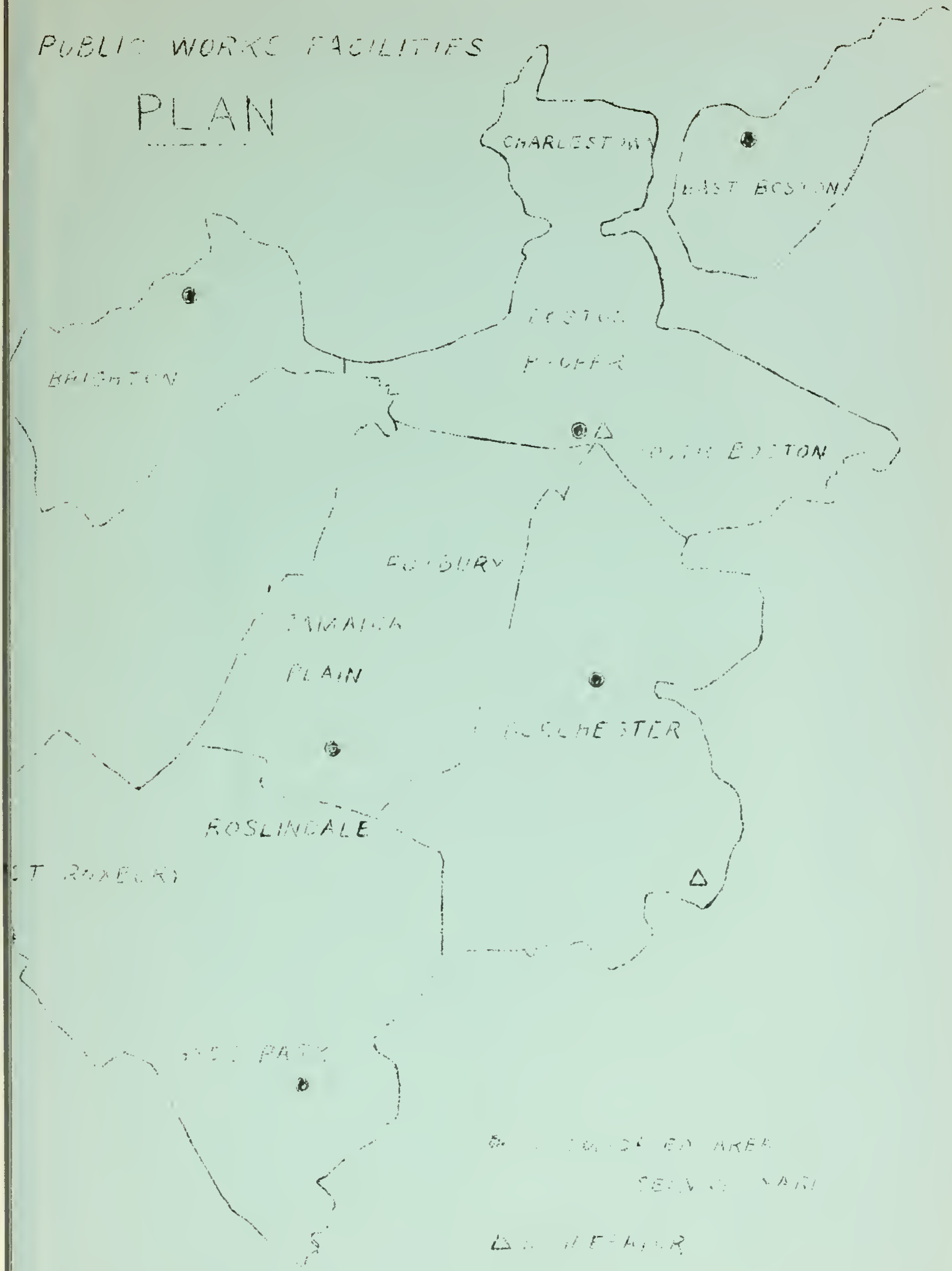
Site Requirements

Public works yards should have ample space for vehicular storage, a small building for personnel purposes, storage space for sand and gravel and adequate water, drainage and sewage facilities. The actual size of the yard is a function of the area served, which in turn determines the number of vehicles, the quantity of sand and gravel stored, etc.

Relationship to Surrounding Land Use

Public works yards should be located so as to avoid incompatibility with the surrounding land uses. Because of the similarity and nature of both industry and public works services, yards are best located in or near the edge of industrial complexes. Visually, public works yards make poor neighbors for residential areas, unless they are buffered (eg. by trees or other suitable buffers). Yards may also be well located when they are near open uses of land. They are not particularly detrimental to commercial areas, providing they are located on the edge, not in the midst of retailing functions. Given the visual aspects, the traffic and safety considerations and the general public attitude, public works yards are best associated with an industrial area.

PUBLIC WORKS FACILITIES
PLAN



IV THE PLAN for CONSOLIDATED AREA SERVICE YARDS

The plan for public works area service yards reflects the desire to adequately meet the city's needs for basic public works services through consolidation of existing facilities in dispersed area service yards.

Also, the plan provides for two incinerators, one of which is currently in operation in the South Bay and another which is proposed for the area in Dorchester, east of the Southeast Expressway, which is presently an open dump.

The locations for the various area service yards are as follows:

Main Yard

Location: vicinity of South Bay

Service area: Boston Proper, Charlestown, South Boston

Analysis: This yard will be the largest one because of its extensive service area and because it is the main yard. Its nearness to the proposed crosstown highway system, its access to the downtown's major street system, its nearness (yet "edgeness") to the downtown area are its principal advantages. In addition to other functions carried out by other yards, it alone will contain the bridge service yard facility and the street sign storage facility. It meets the criteria established in the previous section very well. Charlestown is included in the service area, because the time-distance relationship from the Main Yard to Charlestown is but a few minutes, despite its separation from the main-

land of the city. Also, Charlestown is connected to the city both by arterial highway and several bridges.

Brighton

Location: vicinity of Western Avenue

Service area: Brighton

Analysis: This yard will probably be the smallest yard and although it is multi-functional the area served will limit the quantity of services rendered. The present public works yard should be relocated between the Boston and Albany railroad and Western Avenue.

East Boston

Location: vicinity of Eagle Square

Service area: East Boston

Analysis: The existing public works yard can be retained where it is because it meets the established criteria quite well. Access to the McClellan Highway is a decided locational advantage.

Forest Hills

Location: vicinity of Morton and Forest Hills St.

Service area: Jamaica Plain and Roxbury

Analysis: The existing public works yard can be retained, although there is some question of compatability with proposed adjacent land use. If the land between the proposed Southwest Expressway and Franklin Park remains primarily residential (or is even more intensively developed), the yard would have to be better buffered than at present.

Nevertheless, the general locational advantages are in favor of its retention.

Hancock Street, Dorchester

Location: Hancock Street, Dorchester

Service area: Dorchester

Analysis: The existing public works yard should be improved by buffering from the nearby residential area. However, in the long-run it is unlikely that the public works yard and the welfare building would occupy the same general location. One or the other will eventually need expansion room. If the decision is made to relocate the public works yard elsewhere in Dorchester, a location near the proposed incinerator would be a compatible land use, yet it would suffer the disadvantage of a more central location. Land-use proposals for industrial land in Dorchester must be more thoroughly explored before any decision is made to relocate the Hancock Street yard.

Hyde Park

Location: vicinity of Dana Avenue

Service area: Hyde Park, Roslindale, West Roxbury

Analysis: The existing public works yard can be expanded to meet the needs of the still-growing "suburban" sections of Boston. Access to the proposed Southwest Expressway for emergency purposes is another advantage.

Incinerators

The most progressive and probably most economical way for the city to handle its refuse disposal is by means of incineration. The present incinerator is judged to be capable of

handling existing requirements. Yet this is perhaps because open and sanitary fill dumps in West Roxbury and Dorchester are currently being operated. If the dumps are closed, another incinerator will be necessary to serve the southern half of the city. Open dumps are health and safety hazards to nearby residential areas, particularly.

The second city incinerator should be built on the site of the existing open dump in southeast Dorchester, near the expressway.

An advantage of the incinerator is the possibility of selling excess steam for power purposes, as--in the case of the South Bay incinerator--power for City Hospital or industrial users.

Contractual arrangements may prove profitable for the city to rid itself of refuse in Brighton and East Boston, either by contract with Newton, Watertown or Brookline in the former case, or with Chelsea or Revere, in the latter.

Proposed abandoned facilities are mentioned in Appendix D.

V. The CASE for an EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

It is quite likely that the Public Works department of the City of Boston will expand in the future. There are several cogent reasons which support this observation:

Closer Government Relationships

The first reason is that the relationships between the levels of government (city, state, federal and perhaps a future level of the metropolitan area) will be substantially strengthened in the future. Citizens and government alike will demand greater return for public monies expended on the planning and execution of public works projects. We may expect at least more intensive, if not extensive activity by government.

The Backlog Demand

The large backlog of needed facilities and equipment for providing Boston residents with municipal services is impressive. Attention is called to Appendices B and C which list improvements and costs for just the next five years alone! This does not include major buildings such as the new municipal auditorium, a new city hall, or any schools, libraries, fire stations, etc. It is possible that the actual construction of some of these facilities may be undertaken by the city's public works department. This in itself would require an expanded number of personnel, equipment and vehicles.

Under the housing ammendments of the 1955 law, funds may be advanced to states, municipalities and other public agencies to help finance the cost of planning public works. Such grants are repayable to the federal government when construction is started or contracts are awarded from funds authorized by the local public body for

construction of the project.

The lack of adequate planning funds is a key problem in many communities such as Boston, particularly in the preliminary planning phase, which on many types of projects can be most troublesome and time consuming. Even when some public works are ready for final design the inability to undertake immediate final planning may delay the cost of public works and increase the final costs of each project. Therefore, it is recommended that Boston explore fully the possibility and feasibility of securing more interest-free funds from the federal revolving fund for specific projects which, under federal limitations, are reasonably assured of construction within five years. Such projects might include...

Bridge reconstruction
Hospital expansion
Public auditoriums
Community Centers
Public garages
A new city hall

An approximation of the current equipment demand of over $775,000 by the public works department may be summarized as follows:

16 new street sweepers	$143,000
7 front-end snow loaders	$100,000
30 dump trucks	$185,000
50 plow attachments	$ 50,000
3 walter snow-fighters	$ 75,000
4 street-flushers	$ 65,000
1 lg. tractor for yard use	$ 20,000
2 catch-basin cleaners	$ 22,000
9 small road-rollers	$ 54,000
6 air-hose compressors	$ 30,000
16 passenger cars	$ 32,000

Coordination with other city departments

Perhaps the most important reason is that the City will expand through coordination of its construction, development and equipment replacement program with its urban renewal activity through

the Capital Improvement Program and the Office of Development. This coordination, along with technological change, may radically change both the personnel and job functions of the department, perhaps necessitating some further reorganization, even though it has recently undergone reorganization and improvement.

The public works system plan, as developed, will not be rendered obsolete by increased activity, but instead can be implemented by adding a construction yard to handle any expanded construction. This single-function yard would probably be best located in Dorchester, on the verge of an industrial area.

Appendix A

Public Works Dept.: **Existing Facilities**

Central Yard - 710 Albany Street

Automotive
Garages:
280 Highland St. - Roxbury
624 Albany St. - South End
162 Hancock St. - Dorchester
327 Forest Hills St. - Jamaica Plain

Bridge & Highway Division

Bridge Service Yard - 8 Atkinson St. - Roxbury
Broadway Bridge
Charlestown Bridge
Chelsea St. Bridge
Congress St. Bridge
Malden Bridge - Charlestown
McArdle Bridge - Chelsea
Northern Avenue Bridge
Summer St. Bridge - Boston & South Boston

Paving Service Yards
10 Atkinson St. - Roxbury
320 Eagle St. - E. Boston
263 Rutherford Ave. - Charlestown
315 Western Ave. - Brighton
327 Forest Hills St. - Jamaica Plain
160 Hancock St. - Dorchester
280 Highland St. - Roxbury
636 Albany St. - South End
Dana Avenue - Hyde Park
40 Moreland St.,-West Roxbury
Street Signs & Storehouse - 8 Atkinson Street

Sanitary Division
Yards
650 Albany Street - South End
174 W. Second Street - South Boston
320 Eagle Street - East Boston
263 Rutherford Avenue - Charlestown
315 Western Avenue - Brighton
279 Walter Street - Roslindale
58 Gibson Street - Dorchester
60 Ritchie Street - Roxbury
225 Victory Road, - Dor. Transf. Sta.
200 Gardner St. - W. Roxbury
70 S. Bay Avenue - Incinerator
11 Dana Avenue - Hyde Park
162 Hancock Street - Dorchester
327 Forest Hills Street - Jamaica Plain

Sewer Division

Main Drainage Works - 407 Mt. Vernon St. - Dorchester (Columbia Pt.)
Moon Island, - [illegible]
Pumping Station - Union Park
Yard - 680 Albany Street - South End
315 Western Avenue - Brighton
327 Forest Hills Street - Jamaica Plain
58 Gibson Street - Dorchester
Sewer Cleaning 3089 Washington Street - Jamaica Plain

Water Division
Central Yard - 710 Albany Street - South End
Other Yards - 315 Western Avenue - Brighton
263 Rutherford Avenue - Charlestown
58 Gibson Street - Dorchester
327 Forest Hills Street - Jamaica Plain

APPENDIX B

Public Works Dept.: Proposed Improvements

(From CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, 1960-65)

Bridge Repairs and Construction

City-wide bridge repairs and construction
  Solid fill of Dover St. Bridge (at Ft. Pt. Channel)
  Dalton St. Bridge over B & A RR and Back Bay
  Charlestown Bridge & Warren Bridge over Charles River, repairs
  Summer St. Bridge, Ft. Pt. Channel
  Rebuild Malden Bridge over Mystic River
  Rebuild Bennington St. Bridge over M.T.A.
  Everett St. Bridge, East Boston, rebuild
  Rebuild Bridge over New Haven R.R., Dorchester Avenue
  Replace Northern Avenue Bridge over Ft. Pt. Channel
  Rebuild Central Avenue Bridge over Neponset River
  Reconstruct Summer Street Bridge, reserve channel

Highway

City-wide reconstruction and repair of streets, highway-making, and construction of sidewalks

Sanitary

General Garage and Sweeper Bldg. - Albany Street
Refuse Incinerator (1963-5), Dorchester

Sewer

City-wide sewer construction
Prudential Sewer Improvements, Back Bay
New Tide Gates in the Intercepting Sewer, Roxbury
Davenport Brook Improvements, Dorchester
Fairfield St., Overflow Replacement
Canterbury Branch of Stony Brook Improvements, West Roxbury
Sewer Replacement, Hereford St., Back Bay
Bussey Brook Improvements, West Roxbury
Elmwood St. Brook Improvements, West Roxbury
Glenhaven Rd. Brook Improvements, West Roxbury
New North Side Low Level Interceptor, So. Boston
Haywoods Brook Improvement, Roxbury
Lexington St. Overflow, East Boston
Berkeley St. Overflow, Back Bay
Spring St. Brook Improvements, West Roxbury

Water

Cleaning and Cement Lining of Pipeline from Roxbury to South Boston
Extension of High Service System to Portland and Causeway Street
Water Pipe under Charles River at Warren Avenue Bridge

APPENDIX C

1960-65 Capital Improvement Program

Financial Aspects

Service	Total	FPI	FPA	New Bonds	Other[1]	State Aid
Bridges	$ 8,545	$500	$1,980	$ 880	$ 75 N 50 M 640 GR	$4,420
Highway	15,000	...	2,000	10,000	....	3,000
Water	410	...	...	...	410 W	.....
Sewer	3,920	140	2,495	965	160 GR	160
Sanitary	2,190	190	...	2,000	...	.....
Totals:	$30,065	$830	$6,475	$13,845	$1,335	$7,580
Per Cent	100%	2.8	21.5	46.1	4.4	25.2

[1] Other

N-New York, New Haven & Hartford R.R.
M-Town of Milton
W-Water meter revenue
GR-General Revenue

FPI - Funds Previously Issued
FPA - Funds Previously Authorized

Appendix D Facilities to be Abandoned

Charlestown	Service Yard on Rutherford Avenue
Dorchester	Service Yard on Gibson Street
Roxbury	Service Yard on Highland Street, Ritchie Street
South Boston	Service Yard on Second Street
West Roxbury	Service Yard on Moreland Street West Roxbury Dump on Gardner Street

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